



SEPTEMBER 24

CHRIST, CULTURE & THE CROSS

JESUS, MARRIAGE, & DIVORCE



GETTING STARTED

This weekend we continued in our series, *Christ, Culture & The Cross*. We learned what it looks like to follow Christ when it comes to the important topic of marriage and divorce.

As you begin this study, take a moment to pause and reflect on the truth of this verse:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 15:12-14



STUDY QUESTIONS

Note: We all come to this study from different life situations. Some of us are married, others single, others divorced and remarried, and so on. So, as you answer these questions, feel free to tailor your responses to your life situation.

1) This weekend we learned that if we want to follow Christ instead of the culture, we usually need to keep our commitment to our marriage. Michael shared the following two practical implications that flow out of this principle:

- *If You're Married . . . Make It Work.*
- *If You're Divorced & Remarried . . . Repent & Move On.*

a. Which of these implications do you find most helpful, and why?

b. Which of these implications do you find most challenging, and why?

2) Growing up, how was marriage modeled for you by your parents or caregivers? How did those models impact your view of marriage? How do those models compare to what you know of a healthy biblical model of marriage?

3) Read the following quote from the book *Sacred Marriage* by Gary Thomas.

What if God didn't design marriage to be "easier"? What if God had an end in mind that went beyond our happiness, our comfort, and our desire to be infatuated and happy as if the world were a perfect place? What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?

a. How does this quote resonate with you? Have you ever thought of marriage in this way?

b. What do you think God is trying to produce in the life of a Christian who is committed to making their marriage work?

4) As believers, we are called to love one another as Jesus loved us. If someone is married, this applies especially to their marriage. The following are some great relational passages from the New Testament. Read them as if they were specifically written for married couples. Write down any key words or phrases that jump out to you about how Christians should approach their marriage.

- John 15:12
- Philippians 2:3-8
- Romans 12:9-10
- Ephesians 4:32-5:2
- Colossians 3:8-10, 12-15
- 1 Peter 3:8-9

a. What impact do you think it would have on a marriage if both spouses put these principles into practice?

b. What impact would it have if they don't put them into practice?

5) Reread Philippians 2:3-8. Paul challenges the Philippians to have the same mindset of Christ when it comes to their relationships. Spend a few minutes reflecting on the humility Jesus showed by *taking the nature of a servant* and becoming *obedient to death, on a cross*.

a. What about His example of humility, in these verses, impacts you the most?

b. For us, growing in humility means to think of ourselves less and to think of others more. What are some practical examples of how this kind of humility and service show up in a healthy marriage?

6) If a couple wants to strengthen their marriage, the first step is to strengthen their own character and personal walk with the Lord. In his book *You and Me Forever* Francis Chan writes,

... the only way to "increase" ... our Christlikeness, is to increase our time and effort in pursuit of Him. To drastically increase the amount of time we spend in prayer. This is hard. I recognize how many things demand our constant attention. Sometimes I feel like I am just a moment away from operating out of the flesh. I can ride the wave of a good quiet time with Jesus for a day or two, maybe even a week! But then that inner struggle picks up. The further out of step I get with the Holy Spirit, the weaker I become spiritually. If I am going to become Christ-like, I really have to stay close to Christ. I also have to remember that Jesus said,

*"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." **John 15:12-14***

a. What do you think about this quote? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

7) Prayer is a powerful tool we can use in our marriages (or any other relationship that requires growth and healing). The Apostle Paul challenges us to "pray continually" (1 Thess 5:17), and to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions" (Eph 6:18). And the Apostle James adds, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5:16b)

- a. Now spend some time in prayer. If you are married, pray for your spouse and ask the Lord to show you how to “make your marriage work” in new ways. If you are currently single, pray that God will teach you deep lessons about His vision for marriage. Bring any other prayers or concerns before the Lord regarding your relationships and rest in knowing He hears you, He is with you, and He is for you.



TOPICAL PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of each Life Group. Often those who are new to a Life Group are intimidated by praying aloud if they have never done it before. Others are so comfortable with prayer that they can take over the prayer time without meaning to. For these reasons we suggest practicing topical prayer to help your group get comfortable praying together. Here are three basic guidelines:

- 1. Focus on a Single Topic/Request at a Time**
- 2. Pray Several Times Together**
- 3. Keep Requests/Prayers Short and Simple**